

## Affirmation ( You, Me and Everyone)

### *Why we use Pronouns*

Have you seen somebody with he/him, she/her or they/them on their email signature or their social media bio ?

These are the pronouns that the person would like you to refer to them by, and you would like to be referred to. Like our names, gender pronouns are an affirmation of a part of our identity. Using the wrong pronoun to refer to someone is similar to calling a person by the wrong name. This can come across as disrespectful and unwelcoming to the person. On the other hand using the right gender pronouns as shared by the person you're conversing with could be a shorthand way of saying "I see you" and "I re-affirm your identity"

Typically, society has taught us to make automatic assumptions about what pronouns to use for someone on the basis of their name or visual cues. If a person's gender expression (the way they appear in terms of gender) seems to be male, we'd likely use he/him/his when talking about that person; if a person's appearance seems to be female, we'd be likely to use she/her/hers.

Sometimes a person's gender identity may or may not correspond with the gender they were assigned at birth, or how we perceive their appearance, clothing or name based on the visual cues around gender that we have been taught growing up. The best practice is simply to ask how they want to be referred to.

In addition, not everyone identifies strictly as male or female. So when a person includes their gender pronouns on their email signature line (or on a nametag, when introducing themselves, etc.), they are simply taking the guesswork away for you! It's their way of saying "when you refer to me using pronouns (as opposed to by my name), these are the pronouns I'd like for you to use."

## Pro-Tips for you:

- ☐ Pronouns don't always reveal someone's gender identity.
- ☐ Want to switch up your pronouns? Go for it! Your pronouns, your identity, your choice.
- ☐ Not into pronouns? No problem! You can always use someone's name instead.
- ☐ Did you know? People can have multiple pronouns! It's all about expressing who they truly are.
- ☐ When in doubt just ask! Don't be afraid to inquire about someone's pronouns. A simple "What pronouns do you use?" or "How should I refer to you?" goes a long way.
- ☐ And if you're unsure, defaulting to "they" and "them" is always a safe and respectful choice.

Go forth, pronoun pioneers! Let's embrace the power of language and create a world where everyone feels comfortable and celebrated. You've got this!

Want to know more? , see the [Gender Equality Lexicon](#) produced by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.